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J Oral Pathol Med. 2001 Sep;30(8):471-80. doi: 10.1034/j.1600-0714.2001.030008471.x.

Oral pseudomembranous candidiasis, herpes simplex virus-1 infection, and oral mucositis in head and neck cancer patients receiving radiotherapy and granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF) mouthwash

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PMID: 11545238 DOI: [10.1034/j.1600-0714.2001.030008471.x](https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1600-0714.2001.030008471.x)

Abstract

Oral pseudomembranous candidiasis (OPC) was evaluated in 61 patients receiving head and neck radiotherapy (RT). Herpes simplex virus-1 (HSV-1) reactivation was also investigated in 14 patients. According to the agreed protocol, granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor (GM-CSF) mouthwash was administered in 46 patients with radiation-induced ulcers. Candidiasis was diagnosed in 31 patients. *Candida albicans* was the most frequent isolate. Multiple *Candida* species were isolated from the lesions of four patients. Concurrent candidiasis and radiation-induced ulcers were observed in 17 patients. Viral culture and the polymerase chain reaction disclosed the presence of HSV-1 in five patients. Twenty of the 46 patients, with initial mucositis grade II and grade III, completed RT with mucositis grade I, indicating a beneficial effect of GMCSF mouthwash, although further controlled studies are necessary to verify that. In conclusion, OPC was an important infection in patients undergoing radiotherapy. The role of HSV-1 in oral mucositis during head and neck radiotherapy needs additional study.

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11/15/2020

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